



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 10/11/2005

GAIN Report Number: AS5032

Australia

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

Country of Origin Labeling Likely to Change 2005

Approved by:

Kathleen Wainio, Agricultural Counselor
U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:

Lindy Crothers, Agricultural Marketing Specialist

Report Highlights:

FSANZ has made its recommendation on country of origin labeling to the Ministerial Council and released its Final Assessment Report for Proposal P292. In summary: There have been no changes to the proposed requirements for packaged food or unpackaged fish, fruit & vegetables. Unpackaged fresh pork and preserved pork will have to be labeled in the same way as unpackaged fish, fruit & vegetables. Food sold for catering purposes will have to be labeled with country of origin information. Food sold direct to the public by restaurants, caterers, etc. will not have to be labeled with country of origin information.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Canberra [AS1]
[AS]

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has finalized its review of Country of Origin Labeling requirements, which began in May 2004, and has now made recommendations to the Food Regulation Ministerial Council. FSANZ is recommending the package of measures to strengthen country of origin requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

The Ministerial Council is expected to consider FSANZ's recommendations in late October 2005. If the ministers do not seek a review, the new country of origin standard could become law as early as November 2005.

Summary of Key Recommendations

Packaged Foods

- The country where the food was produced, made, manufactured or packaged must be identified on the label.
- The actual country must be stated on the label, rather than relying on a statement that the product is imported.
- A range of statements is allowed, consistent with those allowed under trade practices law - for example, 'made in...', 'product of...' or a qualified claim such as 'made in country X from local and imported ingredients'.
- The terms 'made in...' and 'product of...' must comply with trade practices legislation.

Unpackaged Foods

- Requirements as for packaged foods, but applying to unpackaged and processed fruit, vegetables, seafood, pork and nuts.
- The application to pork is new to the Food Standards Code and has been included at the request of the pork industry and consumers.
- Unpackaged foods will be required to have the country of origin stated on a label - e.g. a sticker on an orange - or have a sign adjacent to the product at the retail display.
- The print size on the signs must be at least 9mm and the information should be set out legibly and prominently (e.g. in contrasting colors).

FSANZ sees the major benefit of the recommended country of origin arrangements as providing consumers with clear and unambiguous information on the source of a food product, both packaged and unpackaged. Other benefits include:

- Unpackaged foods will now be treated in a like manner, whether locally produced or imported - addressing a present inconsistency, and potential breach of Australia's World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations, in the Food Standards Code;
- The proposed requirements bring unpackaged foods into line with general labeling provisions in the Code; and,
- Consistency with trade practices legislation.

Likely Introduction Of The New Arrangements

Once ministers have accepted the recommendations and the standard has become law, industry will have a phase-in period, during which businesses will have to prepare and apply food labels and signage that comply with the new requirements. The phase-in period is likely to be as follows:

- Unpackaged fish, fruit, vegetables and nuts and packaged fresh produce - within 6 months of the standard becoming law
- Unpackaged pork products - within 12 months

- Other packaged foods - within 2 years (with an additional 12 months for existing stocks).

Further Information

Details of FSANZ's consultation process and the reports prepared in response to these consultations can be obtained from the [FSANZ website](#).

FSANZ and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) intend to prepare a user guide to explain the relationship between trade practices and fair-trading laws and the Food Standards Code.

FSANZ will also facilitate a consumer awareness program - for example, provision of country of origin information in the supermarkets.